



Let's have a conversation about



CANNABIS DURING PREGNANCY

and beyond

WHETHER YOU SMOKE, VAPE, DRINK OR EAT IT

if you are pregnant, trying to get pregnant or breastfeeding you're encouraged to not use cannabis for the health of you and your baby. The chemical in cannabis called THC that gives you the feeling of being “high” can be transferred to your baby while you are pregnant or breastfeeding. To some, pot being “natural” (and now legal) mean it's safe. But that's not necessarily true. Any time you introduce chemicals (or other toxins that come from how it's manufactured or how you ingest it), they can be harmful to a baby's development. **While nothing beats an open, honest conversation with your healthcare professional, here are some answers to your most common questions, both to give you the truth about cannabis use and pregnancy risks and to inform that next conversation with your provider.**

IS ANY AMOUNT SAFE?

There is no known safe amount of cannabis use during pregnancy. Currently, there isn't as much research on the effects of THC during pregnancy as other substances. But that doesn't mean it's safer. Federal classification of Cannabis as a Schedule 1 substance makes research more difficult. But there are some studies that show cannabis use during pregnancy has negative outcomes.

HOW CAN IT AFFECT MY BABY?

Research shows that cannabis can affect a baby's birth weight, making children more prone to health issues—especially in the critical first year of growth. Cannabis use during pregnancy may increase the risk of stillbirth, and THC may also negatively affect a baby's brain development, leading to longer-term behavioral and learning issues. Supporting this, a 2019 study showed a connection between prenatal cannabis use and autism.

I USED CANNABIS BEFORE I KNEW I WAS PREGNANT. WHAT NOW?

Moderate cannabis use before you know you are pregnant is unlikely to cause harm. But, now that you know, it's important to stop. Weeks three through eight are the most sensitive time for causing birth defects.

WHAT ABOUT EDIBLES, VAPING AND OTHER CONCENTRATES?

While edibles, vaping and other concentrates may remove the potentially harmful effects of smoking, THC in your system is still passed from you to your baby. Plus, many of these alternative methods of using cannabis have higher levels of THC, increasing its negative effects.

ISN'T IT A NATURAL SUBSTANCE?

Yes, but so is tobacco. So is opium. And those aren't safe during pregnancy either. Plus, as more states have legalized or decriminalized its use, cannabis has become a big business. With that come newer cultivating methods and higher levels of THC and it isn't clear how these higher strains may increase the negative effects.

WHAT IF I SLIP UP?

It happens. If you do use cannabis while pregnant, the best thing to do is be honest—both with yourself and with your healthcare professional. Together, you can work to understand why and the best course of action to be sure you move forward in the healthiest way possible for both you and your baby.

ARE THERE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR SELF CARE?

Depending on your reason for using cannabis, there are ways to help you help yourself avoid using while pregnant. Exercise—even just taking a walk—releases endorphins to make you feel better and can help you sleep. OTC medications can help with morning sickness. Meditation reduces stress hormones. Talk to your healthcare professional about these and methods for self care.

HOW ABOUT BREASTFEEDING?

Breastfeeding is important to your baby's health and cannabis use is not recommended. THC is present in breast milk and upwards of 3 percent of the what you get can be transferred to your baby. It seems small, but so are they.

HOW LONG IS THC IN MY BREAST MILK?

Tests have shown THC can be present in breast milk within 20 minutes of consumption and is present at least 24 hours after. THC is stored in fat cells, so it can stay in the body longer than other substances, so pump and dump doesn't really work. Your best option to avoid issues is to not use cannabis while breastfeeding.

WHERE CAN I FIND HELP?

Call 2-1-1, visit VTHelpLink.org or 802.565.LINK (5465) or talk to your healthcare professional.

For more information, there's no better resource than your healthcare professional. Remember, they're not there to judge. They're there to help you have the healthiest pregnancy possible. Keep the conversation going.